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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TURKEY: ENVIRONMENTAL HIGHLIGHTS, JAN. - FEB.

REF: 02 ANKARA 8870

(U) This is one of a series of cables providing updates on environmental issues in Turkey. Below are topics covered in this cable:

1. Proposed environmental law withdrawn
 2. WSSD Follow-up
 3. Euros 126 million for accession preparation
 4. Law on membership goes into effect
 5. REC plans for Turkey move forward
 6. Municipal recycling postponed
 7. Possible source of Hepatitis B and C in Ankara
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1. MINISTER PROPOSES THEN WITHDRAWS DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL LAW. New Environment Minister Imdat Sutulogul forwarded proposed environmental legislation to Parliament, and then withdrew it about a month later. The proposed law was designed to strengthen the traditionally weak Ministry by assigning it new authorities and financing, and resolving conflicting responsibilities with other agencies. It appeared to have included a 10 percent fee for plastic bottles that would have troubled soft-drink bottlers, such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola. The legislation would have been the first major revision in environmental law since 1997. Post will follow developments and report.

2. WSSD FOLLOW-UP. A consultant to the Ministry of Environment (MOE) is pouring through WSSD documents to compare the commitments that Turkey made at WSSD with Turkey's laws, EU directives, State Planning Office (SPO) policies, MOE programs and other national regulations. Turkey will continue to seek WSSD partnerships between now and the completion of the lengthy tome.

3. EURO 126 MILLION FOR ACCESSION PREPARATION. The European Commission has approved Euro 126-million for a pre-accession financial assistance program to assist Turkey in preparing for EU membership. One of the five key areas to be studied will address strengthening public administration to improve phytosanitary and veterinary controls, maritime safety, and environmental inspection.

4. LAW ON MEMBERSHIP GOES INTO EFFECT. The law addressing Turkey's joining the European Environment Agency and participating in the European Environment Information and Observation Network entered into force on January 28. As a part of its membership obligation, Turkey will pay dues of Euro 2,033,000 (USD 2.2 million) the first year, of which MEDA (European-Mediterranean Partnership) will pay Euro 1,524,750 (USD 1.65 million). The fee increases and MEDA contribution decreases the second year. By the third year, Turkey will bear the full membership fee -- Euro 3,127,000 (USD 3.3 million).

5. REC TURKEY MOVES FORWARD. Representatives from REC Budapest confirm that plans for REC Turkey are proceeding on schedule. REC Budapest's Deputy Executive Director reiterated that ratification of the REC Turkey Charter by the Turkish Parliament is expected within two months. REC Budapest anticipates that the required bilateral agreement will be signed and ratified by June so the REC could begin operation that month with allotted EU funding. There is still no agreement on legal status (association, foundation, special designation) for the REC. A donors meeting would be held after opening the office.

6. MUNICIPAL RECYCLING POSTPONED. The Ministry of Environment (MOE) is still seeking to engage the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality in its proposed national recycling

program. Although the draft agreement between MOE and the municipality was completed in August, the municipality has yet to sign. On a related note, Ankara recently began a USD 270 million solid waste project in cooperation with a Swiss company.

17. POSSIBLE SOURCE OF HEPATITIS B AND C IN ANKARA. A press release from the Ankara Governate advised that local governing bodies have prohibited the use of waters from the Ankara Stream for irrigation purposes due to recent outbreaks of Hepatitis B and C among some who use those waters.

PEARSON